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ABSTRACT

This paper describes a teacher education program that integrates second language acquisition theory and research with language teaching methods, practical issues, and the development of collegiality in a cooperative professor-student approach. Although not all theoretical approaches may find direct application in the classroom, many have informed language teachers. This discussion draws from specific examples of the contribution of theory and research to the raising of awareness of graduate students as pre- and early-service teachers in the English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) classes they conduct for international students as a part of their practical training. For example, research studies make them aware of the importance of the development of pragmatic as well as grammatical competence for second language learners, so speech acts in the target language are included in syllabi. Discussions they hold as graduate students develop into the sharing of ideas as teaching colleagues in weekly meetings where collegiality becomes an important part of their professional development. The strength of this program design lies in the multiple roles played by participants. (Contains 31 references and a list of suggested readings.) (KFT)

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TESOL Students as Teachers and Colleagues: Integrating Theory, Research, Methods, and Practicum in Professional Development

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Abstract

This paper describes a teacher education program which integrates second-language acquisition theory and research with language teaching methods, practica, and the development of collegiality in a cooperative professor-student approach. Although not all theoretical perspectives may find direct application in the classroom, many have informed language teachers in some way. This discussion draws from specific examples of the contribution of theory and research to the raising of awareness of graduate students as pre- and early-service teachers in the ESL classes they conduct for international students in their practicum. For example, research studies make them aware of the importance of the development of pragmatic as well as grammatical competence for second-language learners; thus, speech acts in the target language are included in syllabi. Discussions they hold as graduate students develop into the sharing of ideas as teaching colleagues in weekly meetings where collegiality becomes an important part of their professional development. The strength of this type of program design lies in the multiple roles played by its participants.

TESOL Students as Teachers and Colleagues:
Integrating Theory, Research, Methods, and Practicum in Professional Development

In examining the existing literature in second-language acquisition (SLA) and teaching methodology, one can find articles and chapters on the integration of theory and practice with regard to the individual skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing (e.g., Grabe, 1998); however, the question arises as to how to relate the various theoretical perspectives and research findings in SLA in general to language teacher education. Writers of articles often address some of the pedagogical implications of their ideas or experimental findings, but specific classroom applications are left to the reader. In my role as a teacher of SLA theory and research as well as TESOL methods, I see it as one of my goals to bridge the gap between theory and practice by taking a cooperative professor-student awareness-raising approach to the discussion of how theoretical perspectives and research findings inform us as acquisition specialists and language teachers. In addition, this approach recognizes its principal participants as having three roles: students, teachers, and colleagues. As a result, the fostering of collegiality assumes a central role.

I will begin with a background of the program that inspired this paper, and then outline some specific examples of how second language acquisition (SLA) theory, research, and language teaching were integrated in the courses I taught. Although based on the courses I designed, the examples are presented in such a way that they are adaptable to other settings.

During the 1998-99 academic year, I taught courses in a program which offers an M.A. degree in Linguistics (Applied Track). The primary objective for the majority of the students was TESOL preparation although some students also had advanced degrees in a foreign language and held teaching assistantships with foreign language departments in addition to their ESL practicum. This diversity was enriching to classroom discussions.

Required coursework in the program includes a three-quarter SLA sequence involving topics in theory, research, and the individual and social aspects of bilingualism, and a three-quarter sequence of TESOL methods-related courses, plus a year-long teaching practicum which also includes service as a pronunciation tutor for one or two international graduate students who are preparing to hold teaching assistantships in various departments.

In addition to teaching the theory, research, and bilingualism courses, and one of the methods-related courses, I supervised the ESL practicum in the fall and winter quarters. Of course, this type of schedule does enhance the integration of theory and practice.

The fall practicum required each of the graduate students to teach a *Communication and Culture Clinic* for international graduate students on campus. Each clinic met twice a week, and participation was required for the international students who were required to take an ESL course. Idioms in English were selected by the program to be the focus of the clinics; however, the clinic teachers had some flexibility in their implementation of this focus. In the winter quarter, teachers designed their own clinics which were offered as electives to the international graduate student population. The practica involved weekly meetings which served as an ongoing dialogue among the teachers, and between the teachers and me.

My major goals for the practica included promoting collegiality by sharing ideas and resources, developing reflective journals, creating a resource book in their library to which they could contribute favorite activities, and developing their teaching portfolios.

The methods course I taught in the winter quarter focused on the various skills, syllabus design, and materials development. I organized it so that each skill became the topic of a workshop format which encouraged the students as teachers of their own clinic sessions to share ideas. This approach culminated in a *shareshop* at the end of the course - a two-day event in which teachers presented a synopsis of their clinics, some of their favorite activities, possible adaptations for other

populations, a rationale for why they had been successful, and ideas about changes they had considered. The clinics the teachers designed focused on such topics as the development of academic and conversational listening skills, oral presentation skills, vocabulary development, improvement of grammar skills in context, and reading and discussion of articles in a seminar format.

As mentioned above, one of the objectives of all of my courses was to integrate SLA theory, research and language teaching. The theory and research courses were conducted in successive quarters. Because of scheduling problems, the student population from the Program in Linguistics in each class was not exactly the same. In addition, the research course included, indeed welcomed as a source of enrichment, students from other fields such as education, and Spanish, and two students who were EFL (English as a foreign language) teachers from Argentina. Admittedly, making explicit reference to the pedagogical applications of various theoretical perspectives and research topics began as a way of holding the attention of this population, rather diverse in backgrounds, interests, and objectives; however, such an approach serves loftier goals. In a chapter in the book *Beyond Methods: Components of Second Language Teacher Education* (1997), Bardovi-Harlig outlines several benefits of SLA theory in teacher education that are pertinent regardless of the language being taught or the particular learning environment. In fact, I began my SLA theory course by explicitly providing this information briefly summarized below. SLA theory contributes to the development of the following:

1. An understanding of both the process and product of SLA, that is, the stages/sequences of interlanguage (IL) development as well as the outcome.
2. An understanding of the numerous factors influencing SLA: linguistic (i.e., the influence of the primary language) and nonlinguistic (e.g., maturational, cognitive, social, psychological factors, etc.).
3. The ability to identify areas where instruction might be helpful, and to understand its limitations. This requires an understanding of the stages of IL development.
4. The ability to evaluate methods and materials for a given population, including error correction approaches and limitations.
5. An understanding of the different roles a teacher can assume: PLANNER of materials, MONITOR (or "sanctioned eavesdropper") of interactions, and FACILITATOR or GUIDE to keep learners on track and provide feedback. It is also important for teachers to recognize that the learner has a responsibility in the learning process.

In looking back on the clinic sessions that I visited as practicum supervisor, I would say the role of a language teacher as a Facilitator or Guide had a particularly strong impact on the teachers in both their syllabus preparation and the way in which they conducted their clinics. For example, on the syllabus for one of the clinics, the teacher referred to herself not as the *Instructor* for the course but as the *Team Leader*, establishing at the outset the role she had set for herself in relation to the students.

Having provided some background information about the program, rather than talk about or around what one can do, I turn now to some specific examples of the integration of SLA theory and language teaching. On the left side of Figure 1, I have outlined some of the theory and research topics that were discussed in my classes. The works that are cited, by no means, constitute an exhaustive list, but serve as a point of departure to provide an idea of the ongoing link that can be established between SLA theory-research-practice, and the diversity of topics. On the right side are some of the pedagogical considerations that arose in our classroom discussions, and below them are some of the actual classroom applications made by the graduate students as clinic teachers. In the following paragraphs, I highlight the details of some of these topics, with the topic number(s) from Figure 1 given in parentheses.

One of the earliest sets of hypotheses (#1) we discussed were those proposed by Krashen (e.g., 1985). Like many others in the field, my students began to develop an understanding of some of the many factors accounting for the variable success of adult SLA. For discussion, we took as our point of departure the following two quotes from Krashen (1985).

> The second-language acquirer in the natural environment who finds himself faced with heavy output demands and incomprehensible input needs a good second-language class! The main function of the second-language class is to provide such performers with good and grammatical comprehensible input that they cannot get on the outside, and to bring them to the point where they can obtain comprehensible input on their own on the outside. (p. 48)

There were nods of approval among the students in response to those statements. I then added the following quote, from the same source:

> Language classes are less helpful when (1) the students are already advanced enough to understand some input from the outside world, and (2) this input is available to them. This explanation predicts, for example, why advanced ESL courses for international students in North American universities are not effective...(p.14)

The students looked at each other wondering what the future was for the very task in which they were engaged, and the jobs they were hoping to have. So I asked them if their ESL learners in the clinics were able to obtain adequate input on their own outside the classroom. All agreed that although their learners were relatively advanced, having been admitted to graduate study at the university, they continued to have difficulty to varying degrees in the different skills. The discussion continued as a brainstorming session of what we, as teachers, can do in the classroom to help them. An immediate application was the inclusion on a needs analysis questionnaire of several questions pertaining to the situations in which the ESL students felt they were having the most difficulty, for example, listening comprehension in one-on-one conversations, in groups, on the phone, with a professor during office hours, in a lecture class, and so on.

The issue of quality as well as quantity of input raised the question of whether student-student interaction (*interlanguage talk*) in pair and small-group activities in the classroom is a good idea. I related some of my experiences with ESL students who have commented from time to time that they don't want to talk to each other; rather, they want to talk only to a native speaker. Given the ratio of one teacher to numerous students in most language classrooms, it is important for teachers to understand the value of learners scaffolding one another in the negotiation of input. I have found that having students work in small groups on a project or problem-solving activity allowed me the opportunity to circulate among the groups, and actually talk to each student. I often heard the voices of learners from within such informal groups that I would not have heard from within the class as a whole where they are much more reluctant to speak up.

One point of frustration for the teachers, whether ESL or foreign language, was trying to reconcile the value of allowing learners a *silent period* with the constraints and demands of a departmentally organized language curriculum. Allowing a learner a silent period in this setting is often a luxury as program supervisors are compelled to ensure that learners are exposed to a specific amount of material in textbooks in order to prepare them adequately for the next level. Although they did not arrive at a solution to the problem, the teachers concluded that sometimes administrative decisions have to be made that are not fully compatible with acquisition theory.

Some of the pedagogical applications in Figure 1 may not be new to experienced teachers, but they helped to provide the graduate students as relatively new teachers with a theoretical foundation for the teaching techniques they had found in their textbooks. For example, they understood the importance of the PAL program (Partners in Acquiring Language), a conversation exchange program

that matches international students with native speaking students on campus for informal practice in conversational English.

The teachers put extra effort into creating an informal atmosphere in the special room reserved for the clinic sessions. They created a room, unlike traditional classrooms, with tables and chairs rather than desks, and decorated it with posters that they had brought in representing areas of the U.S., and American holidays such as Halloween and Thanksgiving. They invited their students to contribute color to the room as well. It was a very comfortable low-filter atmosphere, so much so that we decided to hold our weekly practicum meetings there.

The teachers as graduate students of SLA found themselves more confident about acknowledging the benefits of the low affective filter they had read and heard so much about after looking at recent research (#2), particularly that reported by Schumann (e.g., 1997) on the neurobiological basis for this filter.

Turning to the third topic, an understanding of the stages of interlanguage development, for example, in the marking of temporality in the acquisition of English, French, and German (e.g., Bardovi-Harlig, 1992; Bardovi-Harlig & Bergström, 1996; Pienemann, 1989) helped them in particular to recognize the relative use of adverbials and verbal morphology, to address problems of discourse-level sequencing of tenses and use of aspect in their learners' writing, and to recognize the role of the individual learners' interlanguage stage in assessing the potential benefits of instruction. In the clinic sessions involving grammar and writing, discourse-level meaningful input was used, and writing conferences were scheduled to address individual learner differences.

Teachers also developed a deeper understanding of the role of salience in input and interaction in acquisition (#4), and its potential to override typological markedness in predicting the progress of acquisition. Bardovi-Harlig (1987) had found that ESL learners in an intensive English program produced wh-questions and relative clauses with preposition stranding (the marked form) earlier than preposition pied piping in response to the salience of that form in their input.

For those teachers who included some writing and/or grammar instruction in their clinics in the winter quarter (#5), they discovered the advantages of adjusting corrective feedback strategies to promote development of self-editing skills by learners. One teacher found it beneficial to use a particular color highlighter to enhance specific types of errors in learners' writing, using a predetermined priority list for error correction. Another, the one who saw her classroom role as that of a team leader, conducted a clinic focusing on grammar improvement. To make the session more meaningful for the students, she had them use newspapers, magazines, etc. to find instances of contextualized grammatical constructions they did not understand well, highlight them, and bring them in for discussion. At the end of their clinic, as a class, they developed a grammar guide for other ESL students focusing on the most difficult problems they had identified.

Some of the most popular articles in the SLA literature dealt with the role of attitude, motivation and social identity in language acquisition (#6,7,8). The teachers became increasingly aware of the power of attitude and the complexity of motivation and language as a marker of identity. Motivational factors were tapped in the needs analysis questionnaires that were used at the beginning of the clinics. Learners were asked throughout the clinic sessions if there were particular activities that they would like to see included such as those related to the types of listening situations they found most difficult. As a result, the use of videos (excerpts from TV shows, news programs, documentaries and movies as well as academic lectures) was increased, using guided prelistening activities and postlistening comprehension checks and discussion. Learners were also encouraged to bring to the comfortable atmosphere of the clinic any experiences from outside social contexts for clarification and reflection.

Continuing with a focus on learner variables is the topic of learner strategies (#9). In some of the texts the teachers were using in methods courses, they found that several writers were

emphasizing the need to accommodate different learning styles in the classroom. In one source on writing instruction, teachers were recommended to take into account the following learner factors in course planning: gender, age, previous learning experiences, objectives for learning, individual preferences for the way information is presented and feedback is given on errors, among a host of others. It would be difficult to argue with the principle behind such a recommendation - it's a nice ideal, but *full* implementation in a classroom would indeed be a challenge! Even with their relatively limited experience, the teachers recognized the diversity among students within their own clinics, and the challenge that such an approach would present even with a small group of learners. In telling them of some of my own teaching experiences, I noted the challenges of meeting all of the needs of individuals all the time in what I called a *patchwork quilt* type of classroom - different learners and backgrounds brought together in one class - a problem if one focuses on the differences, but if we stand back and look at them as a whole, the diversity can be quite positive, and in their differences, they can learn from one another. As teachers, we can certainly recognize and address differences by using a variety of student interaction patterns and activities within the classroom, etc., and we should try to work with the differences; however, reasonable accommodation should be the guideline.

Of course, one of the differences to be considered in SLA and language teaching is the role of the primary language (#10a,b) which is particularly evident in acquiring a second language phonology. Because the focus of the fall quarter clinics was communication and culture, aural/oral skills were the emphasis. In addition, these skills were chosen by about half of the teachers to be the primary objective of their winter quarter clinics. Given that many of the international graduate students taking ESL classes were hoping to obtain funding as teaching assistants at some point, or simply wanted to improve their oral skills, these clinics were popular. The question of how to integrate pronunciation with oral presentation skills arose; in other words, how to incorporate form into a communicative language classroom. Research that I have conducted over the past several years has demonstrated that second-language learners make use of speakers' lip movements to facilitate identification of sounds, and that such cues provide significant improvement in identification accuracy as a result of perceptual training, which also generalizes to earlier spoken word identification in connected speech, and corresponding production improvement (e.g., Hardison, 1996, 1998a,b). Consequently, the teachers incorporated information on the articulatory gestures associated with English sounds, especially those that were problematic for their learners who were then encouraged to practice them outside of class. The teacher of one of the clinics that focused on oral presentation skills had been motivated to provide such a clinic by some research articles she had presented in the SLA research class dealing with the oral communication needs of ESL learners in academic programs (Ferris & Tagg, 1996a,b). She addressed specific pronunciation problems in her clinic following the *zoom principle* (Firth, 1992). As the need arose, specific sounds were practiced in context, using words that were relevant for daily communication as well as the individual learners' fields of study. All of the clinics that dealt with oral skills incorporated both segmental and suprasegmental features, noting that it was not at all necessary to sacrifice one in order to practice the other. This decision also followed from research we had discussed (e.g., Derwing et al. 1998).

In addition to pronunciation problems, many ESL learners capture their L2 learning difficulties quite succinctly in a simple phrase: "We need more words" (#10c). The teachers, aware of the hazards posed by dictionary use by learners, worked with their learners on predicting word meanings from context and taking more global approaches to some of their reading.

Given that a language learner's accents often extend beyond specific sounds to the way language is used in discourse contexts, pragmatics became an important part of several clinics (#10d). Learners were encouraged to write down interactions outside the classroom that had not seemed to be successful or ones in which they had not known how to respond appropriately, and then bring them into the clinic for clarification. For example, they wondered what was appropriate to say to someone

whose family member had just died, or interactions as commonplace as responding to compliments, talking with professors, requesting information by phone, and dealing with answering machines/voice mail.

It was not difficult for the teachers to see applications for research on the relationship between phonological memory and chunking in acquisition (N. Ellis, 1996) in their fall quarter clinics which dealt primarily with idioms in English (#11). The idioms were presented in contexts, and recycled often throughout the session. The teachers elaborated on other phrases and contexts in which the key words often appear. Learners were encouraged to contribute phrases they had heard outside the classroom, and to keep a record of them for reference.

Finally, in one of the classes, a discussion arose on the frequency with which we use metaphors to provide a framework for our understanding of concepts by relating them to the physical world (#12). Wolfe (1999) noted a common metaphor used in ESL (and special education): that of referring to the students enrolled in regular classes as *mainstream* in contrast to the others who have been set apart from the group. Specifically, she used the term *stagnant* to refer to those outside of the mainstream classes. This sparked a very lively brainstorming session to see what other metaphors we could come up with in language teaching, and we found a number of them relating to the physical world. In addition to terms related to *water* as in the case of *mainstream*, there is also the term *fossilization* in learning. As a class, we did not all agree with the strong opposition in the metaphors Wolfe proposed by suggesting that the opposite of *mainstream* in the context of language education was necessarily *stagnant* (left on the riverbank). We saw at least the potential for ESL classes to be represented as *tributaries* with the goal of transitioning students to regular academic classes. The result of the discussion was an awareness of the potential bias metaphors may create among educators with regard to the way we view students; however, the use and interpretation of such metaphors varies with the individual.

It will be apparent from the foregoing discussion and the outline in Figure 1 that a substantial part of integrating theory, research and practice is the raising of the awareness of all participants, whether they be theoreticians, researchers and/or classroom teachers, to the level of recognizing the contributions that each of these facets of language acquisition study makes to the other. To that end, I add a final note. Over the past couple of years, I have spent some time looking at various graduate program curricula on the web, particularly M.A. TESOL programs or those with comparable objectives but different titles. All the programs I saw had at least one methods-oriented course. Most had some sort of teaching practicum, but in some cases, it was quite limited and not organized by the program. Opportunities were sometimes limited, and it was up to the student to find them. However, the most striking deficit, in my opinion, was the absence of SLA theory and research coursework in several of these programs. It has always seemed to me through my experiences as a teacher of French as a foreign language, undergraduate and graduate linguistics, and a variety of skills and levels of proficiency in ESL programs, both intensive and academic-level language improvement, that no one becomes a *good* teacher by virtue of having taken one or more methods courses. These courses are certainly important, but graduate programs should have as their objective EMPOWERING the teacher beyond the methods course, by providing information on resources - not the least of which are SLA theory, research, and colleagues.

Figure 1
Theory/Research Topics
1. Filter-Monitor Theory (Krashen, 1985)
Input, Monitor & Affective Filter Hypotheses

2. Neurobiological Basis of Affect in Language (Schumann, 1997)

3. Learnability & Teachability Hypotheses (Pienemann, 1989)
Stages of IL development in marking Temporality (Bardovi-Harlig, 19

4. Salience vs. Typological Markedness (Bardovi-Harlig, 1987)

5. Attention, Learning Conditions (implicit, enhanced, explicit)
(N. Ellis, 1993, 1994; Robinson, 1997), Role of Negative
Evidence (Lyster & Ranta, 1997)

Some Pedagogical Considerations/Applications

Understanding learner variability; questioning *interlanguage talk* as comprehensible; the *silent period*-is it a luxury?; comprehensible input (quality & quantity) & the classroom.

Use of AV aids, realia, language lab; native speaker contact (e.g., PAL program); small class size for input interaction; focus on meaning; low-filter atmosphere.

Reconsideration of importance of affect as a facilitator or inhibitor of learning through association with attention.

Creation of environment to promote positive emotional response to learning situation.

Importance of sequencing of elements in instruction.

Understanding the relative use of adverbials and emerging verbal morphology in marking past time.

Increase in discourse-level meaningful input.
Individual ESL writing conferences to address individual learner differences.

Greater awareness of role of input in acquisition, and basis for learner differences across learning environments.
Salience can override predictions of learning difficulty based on typological markedness.

Understanding of issues in determining optimal learning conditions and effective corrective feedback.

6. Acculturation Model (Schumann, 1986)
Issues of social & psychological distance

7. Motivation in Foreign Language Learning (Clément et al. 1994; Dörnyei, 1990)

8. Social Identity, Investment (Norton, 1997; Peirce, 1995)

9. Learning Strategies (Oxford, 1990)

Individual conferences with learners to develop self-editing skills in writing, self-monitoring strategies in oral presentations.
Development of priority list for error correction.

Understanding of language shock, cultural shock, motivation.

Consideration of psychological factors including motivation in needs analysis, assessment of individual performance, selection of in-class activities and interaction patterns.

Refinement of integrative vs. instrumental. Understanding of influence of linguistic self-confidence, group cohesion in classroom.

Increased use of a variety of media in the classroom (ESL, French). Encouragement of learner-to-learner scaffolding.

Understanding of learners' dynamic set of social identity factors; investment in the target language = investment in social identity, importance of investment vs. motivation, understanding of influence of social power relations on enhancing or limiting input interaction opportunities.

Adoption of a "classroom identity" by each learner.
Bringing in experiences from social contexts to the comfortable environment of the clinic for clarification and reflection. Use of PAL journal to note language learning experiences.

Awareness of various language learning styles.
Realization of challenges presented by the typical "patchwork quilt" type of classroom in trying to accommodate different language learning styles.

10. Role of the L1 in SLA: Phonology, lexis, pragmatics

a) L2 speech development (Derwing et al. 1998; Hardison, 1996, 1998

b) Neurobiological differences: L1 vs. L2 (Jacobs, 1988)

c) Lexis (Kellerman, 1979)

d) Pragmatics (Bardovi-Harlig & Dörnyei, 1998; Bardovi-Harlig et al. 1991; Dörnyei, 1995; House & Kasper, 1981)

Incorporation of learning strategies into needs analysis questionnaires. Variation of classroom activities and interaction patterns: individual, pair work, group work. Individual conferences with learners.

b) Understanding of the contribution of visual input (speakers' lip movements) to improvement in perceptual accuracy of non-native sounds. Relationship between perception and production. Contributions of segmental and suprasegmental features to the perception of ESL learner speech.

Inclusion of segmental and prosodic elements in teaching pronunciation. Incorporation of pronunciation in clinics focusing on the development of oral presentation skills using the zoom principle (Firth, 1992).

Reconsideration of issues of plasticity in the adult brain, fossilization, and strong role of the environment in language acquisition.

Discussion of benefits of immersion as a rich input environment.

Understanding of concepts of prototypicality in lexical semantics as a constraint on transferability from L1 to L2.

Making learners aware of the limitations of a dictionary and thesaurus. Understanding the importance of contextualized language acquisition.

Awareness of features such as modality markers, conversation routines, fillers, etc. in native speaker speech. Understanding of the concept of "discourse accent".

11. Sequencing Model (N. Ellis, 1996)

12. Metaphors in Education (Wolfe, 1998)

Increasing learners' awareness of pragmatics. Inclusion of speech acts (e.g., institutional discourse) to empower learners outside of class. Teaching of communication strategies, upgraders, downgraders.

Understanding the importance of contextualized learning, whole language approaches, large numbers of exemplars, and repetition to strengthen word associations.

Teaching idioms as sequences of words that belong together.
Elaboration of contexts in which specific words appear.
Student contributions of idioms encountered outside of class.
Building vocabulary through understanding of roots.

Awareness of our use of metaphors as frameworks for understanding our environment.
Awareness of metaphors used in education that may represent "non-mainstream" students (e.g., ESL) negatively resulting in development of bias among educators.

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